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ABSTRACT

This policy paper of the Regents of the University of the State of New York describes the need for partnerships between parents and schools, principles underlying such partnerships, and obstacles to establishing such partnerships. In addition to covering these topics, the first part of the paper discusses family, community, and school responsibility for children's education and offers guidelines for developing programs for children and families. The second part of the paper lists the activities of participants in parent partnerships in New York State. These participants are drawn from: (1) families; (2) boards of education, community school boards, and school districts; (3) schools; (4) communities; (5) institutions of higher education; (6) libraries, museums, and cultural institutions; (7) the business community and labor organizations; and (8) the state education department. A list of members of an external advisory committee that helped develop this policy paper is appended. (BC)

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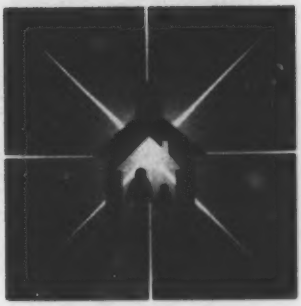

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Statement

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Parent Partnerships: Linking Families, Communities, and Schools

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THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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J. EDWARD MEYER, B.A., LL.B. ..... Chappaqua
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DIANE O'NEILL MCGIVERN, B.S.N., M.A., Ph.D. ..... Staten Island

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THOMAS SOBOL

Executive Deputy Commissioner of Education
THOMAS E. SHELDON

Deputy Commissioner for Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education
ARTHUR L. WALTON

Associate Commissioner for School and Community Services
LESTER W. YOUNG

Assistant Commissioner for Parent Partnerships and Student Development Services
EDNA R. VEGA

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An Education Charter for the Decade of the Child

I.

All children have the right to a healthly, secure, nuturing infancy and early childhood.

II.

All children have the right to live in circumstances which permit healthy intellectual, emotional, physical, and moral development.

III

All children have the right to a free, sound, basic education.

IV.

Each child has the right to an education appropriate for his or her individual needs.

V.

All children have the right to an education which respects their culture, race, socioeconomic background, and the language of their home.

VI.

All children have the right to schools and educational programs which are effective.

VII.

All children have the right to educational programs which prepare them for jobs, for college, for responsible family life, and for citizenship in a self-governing society.

VIII.

All children have the right to pursue their education without fear.

IX.

All children have the right to the resources needed to secure their educational rights.

X.

All children are entitled to an education which involves responsibilities as well as rights.

Adopted March 17, 1989

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The policy statement PARENT PARTNERSHIPS: LINKING FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND SCHOOLS represents a partnership informed by many voices and points of view. We wish to thank the members of the Parent Partnerships External Advisory Committee, a group of parents, grandparents, community members, and parent advocates who were invaluable in setting the course of the policy paper during its initial stages and whose insightful comments on early drafts helped us to clarify our thoughts. Their names and affiliations appear on pages 19-20.

An internal committee of colleagues from the State Education Department provided support throughout the development of the policy statement. We appreciate the contributions of all members of the internal team: Mary Ann Awad, Anita Behn, Debra Colley, Alice Dyer, Mary Foley, Doris Hill-Wyley, Kate Hull, Marilyn Klink, Nancy Krassner, Charles Majors, Barbara Mosinski, Jane Murphy, Zenobia O'Neal, Lynn Reuss, Delilah Reyes, José Sanchez, John Snapp, Lorraine Springer-Scott, Jean Stevens, Sharon Sweeting-Lindsay, and Lucy Tretiak-Caruso.

We also benefited from the very helpful feedback of persons who attended various meetings and presentations where the policy was discussed, especially those who attended a luncheon meeting with the Regents in April and a series of regional hearings held in June.

The final statement of the policy expresses the thought of the members of the Office of Parent Partnerships, Delores Friedman, Joanne Harris, Richard Hoke, and K. Sue Updike with the support of James Gaughan, Ira Schwartz, and Renée Ventura. With the help of all these persons, the Office of Parent Partnerships has incorporaated into the policy ideas representing diverse viewpoints. We have also demonstrated the importance of working together, of forming partnerships, in order to develop a policy that will serve as a guide for locally initiated activities.

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FOREWORD

In most situations parents are children's first and most enduring teachers. Indeed, parents must be involved at all levels if education is to be effective. Their participation creates a new dynamic for learning by linking families, communities, and schools in an educational partnership. This goal requires more than simply expanding services; it requires new ways of thinking and doing.

This paper describes the need for parent partnerships, the principles underlying them, and some obstacles which can stand in their way. It states the Regents policy regarding parent partnerships with schools. This policy builds on the *Regents Goals for Elementary and Secondary School Students*, *The Regents Bill of Rights for Children*, and the Excellence and Accountability Program. It is consistent with *A New Compact for Learning*.

In recent years, the Regents have taken many actions to improve the outcomes of elementary, middle, and secondary education. To improve educational outcomes has meant defining more precisely what those outcomes should be. It has meant seeking better ways to call upon the talents of teachers, administrators, parents, school board members, libraries, cultural institutions, religious institutions, businesses, and others in cooperative ventures. Because education does not take place solely in school, it is impossible to separate the way a child lives from the way a child learns.

This policy paper describes how the Regents view a partnership with parents. To bring about such partnerships will require efforts not only by the Regents, but by everyone who shares the responsibility for providing a sound, basic education which is guaranteed to New York's children in the State Constitution.

The success of parent partnerships will depend on help and understanding from the community as a whole: from employers, community service organizations, higher education, religious and cultural institutions. By working to support parental partnerships with schools, our State and its communities can ensure that this generation of children grows into the knowledgeable and capable citizens our State and nation need.

PARENT PARTNERSHIPS: LINKING FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND SCHOOLS

A Statement of Policy

INTRODUCTION

"It takes the whole village to raise a child." This African proverb reflects a collaborative relationship among families, communities, and schools. The Board of Regents seeks to strengthen this relationship in order to prepare students for life in the 21st century. Learning is a lifelong process, the first part of which involves the family, the community, and the school uniting to provide children with the skills, knowledge, and values they will need to function effectively in our society. If we are to educate our children better, we must build closer interactions among these three partners.

Every child requires the care of nurturing adults. In recent decades, changes in family demographics have made family life and child rearing ever more difficult and uncertain. Many families rely upon a single head of household; often both parents must work outside the home. Many experience increased geographic mobility and economic instability. In many instances, the providers of services to children and families have been slow to adapt to these changing circumstances. Contact between home and school has often decreased just at the time when children need support the most.

The Regents 1967 Policy Statement on Prekindergarten Education recognized parents as children's "first and foremost teachers." This recognition has been reinforced more recently in the *Regents Action Plan* and *A New Compact for Learning: Improving Public Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Education Results in the 1990s*. The partnership between a family and a school, established even before a child enters school, must be nurtured and strengthened throughout the child's school experience.

The family, the community, and the school share responsibility for children's education. The following premises underlie this responsibility:

- All parents have a right and a responsibility to be involved in the education of their children.
- When parents are involved in their children's education, children tend to do better in school.
- Parents need the support of the school if they are to meet their obligations to their children.
- Schools need the support of parents to educate children effectively.
- Community resources strengthen ties between families and schools.

Many educational programs, such as the New York State Prekindergarten Program and the Federal Chapter 1 compensatory education program, already require extensive parental involvement. In 1990, New York State passed the Family Policy Act which established a comprehensive set of guidelines for developing programs and services for children and families. Ten principles underlie these guidelines. Among these principles, the following three most directly relate to the initiatives of this Parent Partnerships Statement:

- Families are best served by comprehensive programs which are directed towards all aspects of individual and family development.
- Families, as the consumers of services, should be partners in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of these services.
- Families receive the greatest benefit from flexible, accessible, and comprehensive services which are delivered in a manner which is culturally and linguistically sensitive to their needs.

The New York State Board of Regents Parent Partnerships Policy is intended to help ensure that these family policy principles govern the provision of educational services to all children in our State. Reflecting the principles contained in A *New Compact for Learning*, this policy paper advocates a broad vision of parent partnerships to strengthen the ability of the family, the community, and the school to meet the needs of the whole child.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

All children can learn. But in order to develop their potential, they need adequate care, and financial and emotional support. Even when they work together, families and schools often are unable to assure that children are safe, healthy, and secure. Yet schools cannot expect children who are anxious, hungry or fearful to benefit fully from education. Schools, parents, and the entire community must work together to protect and nurture all children.

Obstacles often prevent the establishment of effective partnerships. Many parents feel that they are not welcomed as partners in the education of their children. When the leadership of a school is not open to parent participation, space may not be provided for meetings, notices may not be printed in the language(s) spoken by families, and unfriendly manners and comments may be generated. When there is a feeling that parents should parent and teachers should teach, parents may be excluded from participation in decisions made about and for their children in the classroom.

A true partnership means participation. Parents have the right and the responsibility to be involved in the education of their children. Some of these responsibilities are fundamental. Parents, and all members of the community, share responsibility for becoming informed about schools and school programs. Adults who volunteer in schools are an invaluable source of support and enrichment to students. As citizens in a participatory democracy, parents have an obligation to influence the schools to ensure that they act in the best interest of their children.

The cooperation of the broader community is also essential. Employers must consider leave policies which make it possible for parents to visit their children's schools in order to participate and to volunteer. Taxpayers and those who construct school budgets must understand the need to reach out to parents and to support their involvement. Libraries, museums, and other institutions must continue to support parent-school partnerships through their programs.

RATIONALE FOR DEVELOPING PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

Ever since the mid-1960s, the relationship between parental involvement in education and a child's success in school has been documented in evaluations of early childhood programs, such as Head Start, the New York State Prekindergarten Program, and the Ypsilanti Preschool Program. James Comer and other researchers have demonstrated that, the more parents participate and the sooner they become involved, the greater the benefit to children. Researcher Joyce Epstein has traced a relationship between children's success in a particular subject, such as reading, and parents' support of tasks associated with the subject area at home and at school. Research conducted by Don Davies in the United States, England, and Portugal indicates that parent involvement in schools is beneficial to all children, particularly to low-achievers from low-income families. Anne P. Henderson has found that schools that relate closely to their communities outperform other schools. Other investigators have reported more general observations, as in John Goodlad's discussion of the relationship between children's success in school and the identification of values and expectations shared between home and school. A large and growing body of literature documents the efficacy of parent partnerships. In a time of fiscal constraint, this is a cost-effective strategy to improve education.

We know that education does not happen in a vacuum. Opportunities for a child to learn are everywhere — in the home, the neighborhood, the church or temple, the library, the park, or the museum. Learning is also supported by programs such as the well-baby clinic, the school food nutrition program, and the school health program. The Board of Regents, therefore, proposes an expanded alliance of families, communities, and schools to collaborate in providing families with a comprehensive web of services. The school should play a central role in maintaining a caring community that nurtures all children. The Board of Regents is committed to helping to obtain the resources necessary to allow schools to fulfill this role.

PRINCIPLES OF PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

Successful parent partnerships support families in meeting their obligations to rear children in a healthy and safe environment; improve the ability of schools to support every child as a learner; involve families in the classroom and in school activities; enable parents to contribute their specialized skills; provide parents and caregivers with the knowledge and techniques necessary to support children's development and learning; and empower families to participate in making decisions at the school and district level. Parent partnerships also enable parents to fulfill their roles as supporters, decision-makers, and advocates for their children and the schools. They recognize that families, along with schools and religious and community groups, are the source of values and standards. For such partnerships to succeed, they should be built upon the following principles:

- The family is the focus of the partnership. Each family is unique in the way it supports children and interacts with schools and the community. The diversity of families must be respected as partnerships are formed.
- Families, community agencies, and schools each have important roles to play in supporting the development of children. Trust, confidence, and mutual respect are the core of any partnership. Parents must be welcomed as active participants in their children's education.
- Families, schools, community agencies, and religious groups must agree on their responsibilities and expectations for all children. The needs of a child must be met in a manner that is sensitive to individual, cultural, and linguistic differences. This includes assisting parents to acquire the information needed to make decisions that support their children's development, education, and learning.
- The partnership must build upon and build up the strengths of families, and sustain participants in the partnership through difficult times by providing support so they can meet their responsibilities.

In order to establish partnerships to engage families, communities, and schools in the shared responsibility of educating all children from birth until adulthood, the Board of Regents endorses the following policy statements:

REGENTS PARENT PARTNERSHIPS POLICY STATEMENTS

- *It shall be the policy of the Board of Regents that each school board develop and implement a comprehensive parent partnerships policy that ensures that every school develop and implement a plan for effective parent participation.*
- *It shall be the policy of the Board of Regents that the State Education Department will require a parent participation component in the development and implementation of relevant policy and program initiatives, and evaluate such participation as part of the monitoring and school review process.*

ROLES AND ACTIVITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN NEW YORK STATE PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

The recommended partnerships, roles, and activities outlined in this section are not meant to be exhaustive, but to help guide participants as they develop their roles in the partnership. As the partnership develops, other participants, roles, and activities will be identified and included.

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

The family is the primary institution in our society for children's development. Parents are their children's first and most enduring teachers and the models for children's values and attitudes toward learning. In partnership with schools and the community, the family is vital to shaping a positive attitude and a supportive learning environment for education. There are many roles that parents, grandparents, family members, and caregivers can play in the educational process. The family should:

- Ensure that the child is healthy, rested, and ready to learn.
- Maintain continuing contact with the child's teachers about the child's progress and consult with caregivers and school personnel about the child's work, progress, and problems.
- Reinforce at home the knowledge, skills, and values needed to function effectively in society.
- Facilitate the child's development by learning more about curriculum, policy, and home learning at each level of the child's education.
- Recognize the child's strengths and achievements.
- Serve as a child advocate, volunteer, aide, or parent association member.
- Participate in making decisions about the school's program.
- Participate, with all district residents, in the selection and election of school board members.

THE ROLE OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION, COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARDS, AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

State Education Law grants boards of education broad powers to operate schools. Local boards of education (made up of community members, including parents) choose and hire superintendents and principals, appoint and define the duties of all staff, plan and set educational goals, approve teaching materials and books, purchase buildings and sites, and, in general, ensure that program goals are being met. The Parent Partnerships Policy Statement reinforces the key role of the school board in guaranteeing active participation and including representatives from the broadest possible cross section of the community in school-based planning and decision making. The school district should coordinate activities with service agencies in the community to meet the combined needs of students and families. Among the measures that school boards and school districts should undertake to develop partnerships among the family, community, and school are:

- Establish a planning group, or designate an existing one, representative of the community's cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic composition to develop and recommend to the school board a district parent partnerships policy statement that ensures that every school develops and implements a plan for effective parent participation. Members of the planning group should be selected by their peers and should include school board members, teachers, administrators, support staff, students, parents, and a broad representation of the community, including business, cultural and human service agencies, and postsecondary institutions.
- Monitor the schools to ensure successful development and implementation of the school's plan for effective parent participation.
- Periodically, evaluate State, Federal, and local requirements to ensure parent participation.

- Disseminate the district's parent partnerships policy throughout the community in the language(s) of the residents (e.g., posters, parent handbooks, meetings, newsletters, media reports).
- Create linkages to existing programs, or develop new programs, for staff, parents, and community leaders designed to improve communication, aid in conflict resolution, and enable people to work together productively to support children as learners.
- Coordinate services in support of families and children among social service and health agencies, community-based organizations, libraries and other cultural institutions, law enforcement agencies, business, industry, and religious institutions.
- Provide parents with linkages to existing programs that they can use to increase their own skills (e.g., information about effective parenting, intergenerational literacy activities, adult literacy, GED or English as a second language (ESL) classes, classes at the high school level, or P.T.A. Leadership Training).
- Develop and expand outreach activities in the community.
- Link parents to existing parent organizations and networks and encourage the establishment of additional networks.
- Design procedures to help parents to raise questions and express concerns regarding school and school district policies and programs.
- Educate parents in the school board election process.
- Use available funds to increase collaboration to support parent participation.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

In our educational system, the primary operating unit is the school. The foremost mission of the school is to provide children with the skills and knowledge they will need to become productive members of their family and community, while reinforcing the values of a democratic society. The

school, in partnership with the family and the community, is responsible for providing the proper learning environment and employing the appropriate strategies to enable each student to succeed. In order to address more fully the needs of children and families, schools must be flexible enough to adjust their organization, structure, curriculum, instructional practices, and support services. They must recognize that families are as diverse as children. Should a family lack the resources to meet the child's needs for nutrition, health, guidance, or recreation, the school must develop linkages with providers of these services to ensure that each child is fully supported.

To improve education results, the school, working in partnership with others, should:

- Assist in fostering children's learning by involving parents more fully in the education of their children.
- Work as a member of a planning group to develop and implement the district parent policy statement. The plan should include, but not be limited to, goals, objectives, and strategies for effective parent participation and procedures for resolving problems and concerns at each level of the system.
- Work with other members of the planning group to develop and disseminate a handbook for parents, translated into the languages of the families served, containing the school's mission, goals, and educational philosophy to ensure that everyone understands what is expected for and of the child (e.g., educational outcomes, attendance, and behavior).
- Develop and disseminate policies and procedures, translated into the languages of the families served, that explain the appropriate manner for parents to obtain information, raise questions, and air concerns regarding school policies or programs. Conduct ongoing information sessions on these matters.
- Maintain ongoing two-way communication between the home and the school (e.g., telephone conversations, teacher- or parent-initiated conferences, home visits, written notes, collections of children's work).

- Report fully to parents on the individual achievement of the child and the collective achievement of children in the school. Recognize and reward student achievement.
- Encourage and support the development of parent organizations and assist in creating parent networks and support groups.
- Provide a variety of options for inclusion of the family in children's education (e.g., volunteers in the classroom or other school activities, audiences for concerts or plays, or spectators at sports events).
- Engage parents in making decisions about the school's educational program. Conduct regular information and education sessions for staff and parents.
- Designate a staff person to coordinate family/school activities.
- Provide space for use by parents (e.g., meeting space, volunteer space, space for individual counseling).
- Share information and provide education to help parents increase their educational and parenting skills and improve their functioning in society.
- Reach out to parents of very young children by working with libraries and community agencies to provide parents with the information and skills they need to rear healthy children.
- Participate in community-wide coalitions designed to assist families to meet basic needs and provide support in times of crisis.
- Expand professional development activities to include opportunities for staff, parents, and community members to practice working in groups, reaching consensus and facilitating group tasks.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

While schools are central to our effort to enable all children to achieve their potential, they cannot achieve this goal

alone. If children are to learn and develop fully, the community must join with the family and the school to motivate children to learn, to support children in their learning, to instill work habits, and to reward achievement. The combined efforts of community and government agencies support families by providing income maintenance, health care, housing assistance, job training, referrals in times of crisis, and opportunities to join others in support or discussion groups.

Improving educational outcomes through a collaboration among the family, the school, and the community requires that:

- Community members, organizations, and agencies work with one another and with schools and families to create and maintain a safe, wholesome environment for children.
- Community members share an understanding of the school's code of behavior and convey to children expectations for appropriate and responsible behavior.
- Community members work with the school to assess and reorganize educational programs in order to improve effectiveness, meet emerging needs, and develop goals for all children.
- All participants in the child's education accept and discharge their appropriate responsibilities for providing services to children and families.
- The school and the community maintain effective communication and collaboration.
- All participants share resources in the most effective way to foster the development of all children in the community.
- Community members recognize and reward the achievements of schools, school staff, and students.

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Institutions of higher education are essential components to the educational partnership. Colleges and universities conduct research on learning, on how families can best support their children's education, and on how schools can be reorganized to promote greater parent participation in educational

decision making. They have the responsibility for developing preservice and in-service education and professional preparation programs which acknowledge the importance of parents in the education of children. Colleges and universities can participate in parent partnerships as they:

- Develop programs to help parents support their children's education and to help school districts respond to the diverse needs of the families they serve.
- Offer preservice and in-service programs to prepare teachers and administrators to establish partnerships with families, outside agencies, and the community in a multicultural context.
- Increase the availability of courses related to parent education at all education levels in a variety of settings (including video presentations and computer networks).
- Offer parent and staff development programs to support parents' participation in the educational process as advocates, advisors, and decision-makers.
- Collaborate with other agencies and with business and industry to provide continuing education opportunities for parents.
- Encourage lifelong learning by providing parents with opportunities to expand their general knowledge and skills.

THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS, AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Every community has resources that provide opportunities for learning. Libraries, museums, historical societies, zoos, and wildlife preserves make up a diverse network of accessible and affordable resources for families wishing to provide children with experiences which bring to life the facts and stories learned in school. Public libraries and museums often have hours that extend beyond the school day and school

year, thus offering opportunities for families to obtain information and have fun together. The public libraries, museums, and cultural institutions can participate in the strengthening of family, school, and community partnerships as they:

- Schedule activities for children and parents in the afternoon, evening, and during school vacations.
- Provide access to information in a variety of media (print, videotape, audiotape, and (computer networks).
- Develop collections of special interest to families from diverse cultures who do not read or speak English, have special needs, or who wish to know about a child of a particular age.
- Provide programs for families with children not yet served by public school, such as parent–toddler story hours; preschool activity hours; assistance in selecting books; and reading to a child; and neighborhood, evening and summer activities for families.
- Work with local teachers to provide resources for projects, to support homework assignments, and to become knowledgeable about the curriculum.
- Share collections with local child care centers and schools.
- Invite school groups to the library or museum or lend staff to the school.
- Provide opportunities for school staff and parents to learn about books, reading and telling stories, or viewing a collection or exhibit.
- Provide parent/child participation courses and hands-on exhibits.

THE ROLE OF BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND LABOR

Work is essential to the well-being of families. Meaningful work and a regular wage are necessary if parents are to provide food, clothing, and shelter for their children. Employers are encouraged to adopt flexible programs and practices which enable parents to care for their young children and participate in programs and activities throughout the child's

years in school. They strengthen the partnership between home and school as they:

- Work with parents, school personnel, and local business persons to develop lists of skills and characteristics needed by entry level workers.
- Participate in school district planning committees to ensure that school curricula include information and skills needed by persons entering the work force.
- Encourage employees to participate in mentoring programs which bring youngsters to the workplace or provide opportunities for adult–child learning in a variety of settings.
- Encourage employees to support educational institutions and public broadcasting by establishing a matching gift program.
- Purchase or donate equipment needed for educational programs.
- Encourage employees to participate on regional committees or task forces designed to improve the quality of life in the community (e.g., child care, drug and alcohol awareness, recreation).
- Provide support which encourages parents to become actively involved in children's education (i.e., leave policies, use of earned leave time for school visits).
- Support families by providing services, such as on-site child care, on-site classes for grades K-3, and family leave policies to enable persons to care for young, elderly or ill family members.
- Extend staff development at the work place to include staff from the public school.
- Establish job exchange programs between teachers and employees and internships for youngsters and adults.
- Provide space at the work site for adult basic education, English as a Second Language, parenting, or other adult classes.

- Provide training for those who wish to *volunteer* in their child's school (i.e., leadership training, training to clarify goals and expectations).
- Form an alliance made up of parents, schools, and community agencies to help improve education in the community.
- Make space available at the work site for meetings which include parents, community members, and representatives of the public school.

THE ROLE OF THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Board of Regents and the State Education Department, through policy, regulations, monitoring, and technical assistance, will support the development and implementation of parent partnerships. To this end, the Board of Regents is committed to the implementation of the policies articulated in this statement and directs the State Education Department to:

- Develop a State Plan for implementation of the parent partnerships policy.
- Implement a comprehensive parent partnerships policy that ensures every school will develop and implement a plan for effective participation by all parents.
- Develop procedures, including variances for State programs, to promote coordinated delivery of services to children and families.
- Develop a needs assessment to assist school boards in the design and implementation of parent partnership policies and programs at the school and school district level, and a plan for disseminating information about effective family, school, and community partnerships.
- Convene an internal committee to coordinate existing State Education Department administered programs which provide parent education, involvement and services, and to recommend to the Commissioner and the Regents new directions and activities.
- Establish a Statewide Parent Partnerships Advisory Com-

mittee to advise the Commissioner on policy, programs, procedures, and initiatives designed to support the Regents Policy Statement on Parent Partnerships.

- Use existing interagency mechanisms to develop and implement a plan to increase coordination among State agencies responsible for providing services to children and families.
- Require parent participation as a component of relevant policy and program initiatives, and evaluate such participation as part of monitoring and school reviews.
- Provide technical assistance to school districts, schools, and community groups as they plan, implement, and evaluate partnerships to link families, schools and communities.
- Require postsecondary institutions to include in existing preservice and in-service education programs for teachers, administrators, and support staff, practices and strategies for developing, in a multicultural context, partnerships with families, outside agencies, and the community.
- Develop a public awareness program to support the implementation of the Regents Policy Statement on Parent Partnerships.

CONCLUSION

Effective partnerships among families, communities, and schools are an essential component in the Regents and Department's efforts to improve educational results in the 1990s. The Regents Parent Partnerships Policy Statement acknowledges the central role of school boards and schools in coordinating this partnership to enable families to help their children achieve.

A child's academic success depends in large measure upon the strength and comprehensiveness of this partnership among the family, the school, and the community. Decades of research show that when parents and communities involve themselves in the activities of schools, children have a better attitude towards learning, and their academic achievement increases. While parent partnerships are not a substitute for adequate resources for schools, these partnerships are one prerequisite for effective schooling. Successful parent partnerships improve learning by empowering parents to fulfill their roles as supporters, decision-makers, and advocates for children, while increasing the ability of schools to provide children with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they will need to build their futures as productive members of society.

The future of New York State rests with our children. They will build and shape our institutions, our culture, and our traditions in ways we can only imagine. Every one of us has a stake in that future and a part to play in sustaining and nurturing our children to meet this challenge. We hope that the partnership among families, communities, and schools will become a ground swell of support for every family of this State. We envision a "school community" bringing together its resources and collective imagination to support all children as they grow and learn.

PARENT PARTNERSHIPS
EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ms. Jan Atwell, President
Maxine McIntosh, Representative
United Parents Association of
New York City, Inc.

Ms. Frances Berko, State Advocate
NYS Office of Advocate for
the Disabled

Ms. Jennifer Birckmayer
Senior Extension Agent
NYS Family Resources Coalition

Mr. James Black
SETRC Training Specialist
Teacher Center - Syracuse

Mr. Jeffrey Bowen, Administrator of
Research and Development
NYS School Boards Association

Ms. Claudia Butler
Executive Director
Parent Coalition for Education in
New York City, Inc.

Dr. Suzanne Carothers
Early Childhood Education
City College of New York

Dr. Evelyn Castro, Director
Early Childhood Education Unit
NYC Board of Education

Mr. Rick Clifton
Elementary Principal
Dunkirk Public Schools

Ms. Joyce Coppin
Superintendent
Brooklyn High School

Ms. Christiann Dean
Senior Extension Associate
Department of Human Development
and Family Studies
Cornell University

Ms. Lottie Dobson-Shannon
Senior Project Director
Center for Law and Social Justice
Parent Advocacy Program

Ms. Marie Dolan, President
New York State Federation of
Catholic School Parents

Ms. Fern Eisgrub, Assistant
Director of Funded Programs
Community School District 29

Ms. Margallen Fichter
Membership Chairperson
Parenting Education Network of
the Capital District

Ms. Maria Guasp
Executive Director
Division of Multicultural-
Multilingual Education
NYC Board of Education

Mr. Lloyd Hargrave, Chairman
District Advisory Council -
Chapter 1
Buffalo City School District

Ms. Betty Holmes, Director
DIAL-A-TEACHER PROGRAM
United Federation of Teachers

Dr. Mildred Hudson
Program Officer
Dewitt Wallace Reader's
Digest Fund

Ms. Argie Johnson
District Superintendent
Community School District #13

Mr. Michael Joseph, Jr.
Executive Director
Rural Schools Program
Cornell University

Dr. Fern Khan, Dean
Bank Street College
School of Continuing Education

Ms. Gail Koser, Acting Director
Policy Analysis Bureau
NYS Council on Children and Families

Mr. Howard Lewis
Assistant Superintendent of Federal Projects
Buffalo City School District

Ms. Carol Lipsky
Regional Director
E.P.I.C.
Pace University

Ms. Nancy Martinez, Director
Bureau of Policy Planning
NYS Dept. of Social Services

Ms. Ellen McHugh, Co-Chair
District 75
Parent Advisory Council

Ms. Lorraine Montenegro
Executive Director
United Bronx Parents

Ms. Peg O'Brian, Advocacy for Disabled Specialist
NYS Office of Advocate for the Disabled

Ms. Helene O'Brien
Educational Head Organizer
A.C.O.R.N.

Ms. Nancy Oskow-Schoenbord
Parent Representative

Ms. Betty Osta
Rochester City SETRC
Central Administrative Office

Mr. Richard L. Poussaint
Chairperson, Association of Compensatory Educators Parent Involvement Committee
Malone Central School District

Ms. Maryann Ramaley
Parenting Chairperson
NYS Parent/Teachers Association

Ms. Juanita Ray-Crane
Parent Representative

Mr. Raymond Rivera, Director
Parent Development Center
District 1 - PS 63

Ms. Ruth Sabo
Legislative Associate
Children and Families Committee

Ms. Cathy Smith-Hogan
Parent Representative

Ms. Edna Suarez-Colomba, Director
Office of Parent Involvement
New York City Board of Education

Ms. Sheila Sussman
Executive Director
Center for Family Resources

Mr. Dominick Uzzi
Executive Director
Council of Supervisors and Administrators

Mr. Ken Wesolowski
Parent Representative

UNITY

I dreamed I stood in a studio
and watched two sculptors there,
The clay they used was a young child's mind,
and they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher; the tools there used
Were books and music and art;
One a parent with a guiding hand,
And a gentle, loving heart.
Day after day the teacher toiled,
With touch that was deft and sure,
While the parent labored by the side
and polished and smoothed it o'er.
And when at last their task was done,
they were proud of what they had wrought,
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.
And each agreed they would have failed
If they had worked alone.
For behind the parent stood the school,
And behind the teacher, the home.

Author Unknown